

Introduction to the FNCV 2006 Biodiversity Symposium Issue: *Invasive species*

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In 1981 the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) published a special issue of *The Victorian Naturalist* (Vol. 98 No. 1) that included articles about introduced mammals, trout, non-marine molluscs, introduced aquatic plants, weeds, boneseed and pigs. All of the plants and animals discussed are species introduced into Australia since European settlement and have become pests.

The concept of 'introduced' species is very much a blurred one, because 'introduced' and 'pest' are not necessarily synonymous. The deliberately-introduced biological control agents for some of these pests would not generally qualify as pests themselves. There are also native species that have become pests. For example, the Cootamundra Wattle is an environmental weed over much of south-eastern Australia. Some native species have become pests without translocation from one area to another; the Noisy Miner has become more common in remnants because fragmentation of woodlands and forests has resulted in conditions more favourable for this species.

This special issue of *The Victorian Naturalist* has a diverse range of papers. The papers by Gillbank, Robinson, Hingston and Weiss were presented at the 2006 FNCV Biodiversity Symposium on Sunday 10 September; the remainder were presented later as manuscripts. The topics covered range from the history of introductions of exotics by Ferdinand Mueller; the threats of invasive plants and animals to our environment; the measures used to

control them; programmes that involve the general community in helping to prevent the entry and spread of these invasives; and future threats. These topics take in issues related to plants, animals and fungi.

The environmental and social consequences of the spread of these invasive species are well known. Many are now targets of containment or elimination programmes. Yet the elimination of an invasive species is not easy, and once an invasive species becomes established, eradication of it is nearly impossible. The main priorities today are to prevent the entry of invasive species in the first place, and this includes determining priorities based on the levels of risk that they pose.

The annual FNCV Biodiversity Symposium highlights different environmental issues that affect our native flora and fauna. Invasive species are a major threat, and these have become more apparent because of increased international travel and trade. The contents of this issue highlight the threats that we face but also provide some glimmer of hope that major incursions can be stopped early.

The FNCV wishes to thank all the presenters at the 2006 Symposium as well as those people who prepared written presentations for this issue. The FNCV also acknowledges the support of the Department of Sustainability and Environment for assistance with catering at the Symposium.